

PS 3501

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1910












THE HAPPY TEACHER



THE
HAPPY TEACHER

BY
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NEW YORK
B. W. HUEBSCH
1910

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TO
THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO
WERE MY STUDENTS
AND THROUGH WHOM I WAS A LEARNER
MDCCCLXXVII—MCMX



AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS poem was read before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Leland Stanford Junior University, May 21, 1910, at which time the author commenced *emeritus*.



THE HAPPY TEACHER

I

Who is the Happy Teacher?—Represent
In his dimensions like himself, O Muse,
His very effigy, his lineament
Essential: yet, as painters ever use,
Portray the happy guide of noble youth
Ideally,—that is with inward truth!

Thus without due premeditation
Invoking with rash utterance
The Muse (presumptuous son of Earth,
Daring to summon as a slave
The Goddess of celestial birth!),
I head my pinnace to the wave;
But, look you! not a zephyr blows
To clear us from the lee of prose:

THE HAPPY TEACHER

“Be brisk there, hearties, man the oar,
And make a shift to pull off shore!”

Lo! scarcely under steerage-way,
I feel a presence at the prow,—
A thrilling voice commands me “Stay!”
We drop the oars, our heads we bow.
“Follow,” the Goddess bids, “the trace
Of him who utter’d nothing base;
Let Wordsworth be thy pilot, for
He sang the Happy Warrior.”

“Be it far from thee to advise
Me emulate that lofty song,
O Muse!—What verse-craft could disguise
My fragile foil’d against his strong?
Ah! cap and bells should crown th’ em-
prise.
I cannot string Ulysses’ bow,
My grasp too weak, my reach too low.”

The Muse's answer how rehearse
In rime thus unheroic?—Terse
And stern to this effect she spake:
“What boots it weigh the form of verse?
Doth not the soul the body make?
Deep counsel with thy Spirit take!
Thence streams the right afflatus,—storm
Of living utterance: for form
(Her voice was edged with some disdain)
If any poet there remain
Yet uninform'd with instinct,—well,
Let him aspire to doggerel!”

The message,—if a little tart
Tonic the more,—I take to heart;
With trembling hand I string the lyre,
And, prompted by that sneer, aspire:
Touchstone will chuckle, if he hark it,
“Right butterwomen's rank to market!”

Beginning, plunge we if you please,
As Horace bids, *in medias res*,—

THE HAPPY TEACHER

Words signifying *Quite at random*,
As easy writers understand 'em;
And if we treat, not as we ought to,
Of what the Happy Teacher 'll not do,
The Muse may later bid us pen her
A rime less negative in tenor.

He will not break the bruised reed
Which feebly lifts its little spire;
Nor will he quench the smoking
flax
Where Genius yet may burst to fire;
The hungry he'll not underfeed,
Weak appetite not overtax.

He will not strive to loose or bind
The bands that starr'd Orion wove;
Precept may shake, not sever these
Ethereal cables knit with love:
Sweet influences of the mind
Immortal as the Pleiades.

FUNDAMENTALS

Counter to Mother Nature's course
Task not the heart, nor cudgel brain
Genial propensity to quell;
Thou'lt have thy labor for thy pain:
Inevitable thy remorse,
O sire of Richard Feverel!

His basic principle thus flows
When set to music; but to those
Who treat the soul as a machine,
Small reason in the rime is seen.
Their schools and systems, all and some,
Seem founded on the axiom
That gear of clock-work can direct
The engine of the intellect.
They deem, like alchemists of old,
To find in their retorts the gold,
Blind to the true transmuting stone,
Only to Nature's bantlings known.
The spirit bloweth and is still:
Come, harness it to turn our mill!

THE HAPPY TEACHER

No teacher, but mechanic tool,
Who, when the angel moves aright
The waters of Bethesda's pool,
Would thermograph them by some rule
Of Réaumur or Fahrenheit.

Our happy Guide, of Socrates'
Athletic school, distrusts degrees.
Why dub the graduated ass
Whose *ne plus ultra* is to pass,
Honorificabilitudinitas?
O runner, fling aside the crutch!
Is his monition; overmuch
Our Capuan schools abound in aids,
Diplomas, titles, badges, grades:
Why titillate with bait so slight
The hungry edge of appetite?
Why tempt the torpid? Fat of rib
Is fat of wit: shut up the crib!

When from the mint the gold of Burns,

FRIPPERY

Crisp with the guinea-stamp, returns,
The gold's the gold, we understand,—
Yet how the better for the brand?
When did promotion come to knowledge
From furbelows aflounce at college?
Amid the courtiers glittering
Stood rusty Franklin less a king?
To boys leave bagatelles! Pray, what
Avail'd the doctor's hood to Watt?
If, pamper'd like an Oxford don,
The cause that made him lean forgone,
And dubb'd D. D., how more divine
Had been the Poet Florentine?
Shall starry Galileo trail
Initials like the comet's tail?
What proud abbreviation beats
In splendor the curt name of Keats?
How choicelier had Horace writ
Could he have sign'd his odes D. Litt.?
And what diploma, pray, invent
For Master William Shakespeare, Gent.?

THE HAPPY TEACHER

Commensals of the Table Round,
Careless they sit about the board
With bread of angels whitely spread,
Churl, Seneschal, and Knight and
Lord;
Invisibly the best is crown'd:
Where Arthur sits, there is the head.

Ah! wouldst thou yeoman service do
In that Republic where the great,
Through strength in large endeavor
spent,
Achieve the Freedom of the State,
Put childish things away,—pursue
“The things that are more excel-
lent.”

No flowery phraser is our hero,
Like Seneca (they say) to Nero;
Teaches to be a self-commander,
As Aristotle, Alexander.

MANHOOD

He suckles (for the teacher good
Begins at least with babyhood!)
With milk of humankindness Byron;
And, like Thessalians coach'd by Chiron
(That pedagogue quadrupedantic),
His young barbarians grow less frantic,
Their college yells and track events
Well intersperst with wit and sense;
While football stars, those padded giants,
To letters condescend, and science.

Unbought, unmortgaged, unsubdued
To the commercial age's mood,
He nourishes ambition higher
Than that of Carthage and of Tyre;
Nor presbyter nor pontiff he
In temple of Publicity;
Withholds from king of street and pit
The tax that pays the hypocrite;
Impracticable to refuse
To truck and trim for revenues;

And setting little store by knowledge
Of arts to advertise his college.

Seldom his heart upon his sleeve
He wears: not careful to relieve
That organ of its perilous stuff
By cuppings, innocent enough,
Of frequent, brief communication
To *Athenæum* or *The Nation*,
As who should say, "The deuce is in't
Unless I air myself in print!"
Leaves unperturb'd the spirits vext
That squeak and gibber through the
text

Shakespearean,—such matters nice
Best left to Furness, Wright, and Dyce.
Why prod our *precious square of sense*,
Not *senselesse of the bob*, from thence
To shed upon confusion still
No light, but darkness visible?
"Let *bends adornings* stand," he cries,

“THE BRAN OF SCHOLARSHIP”

“*An arm-gaunt steed, runawayes eyes,
To his owne scandle,—be it so;
Woo’t drinke up Esill?—Goodness, no!
Who rashly hawk from handsaw plucks
Gets finger-bitten: crux is crux.*”

“Ah! hold not to the hungry lip
For bread the bran of scholarship,
Nor to the thirsty spirit thus
Commend the cup of Tantalus,
And out upon those doctors who
What wiser Shakespeare does, undo!
‘Budge doctors of the stoic fur,’
Who with their paltry glosses blur
The authentic writing on the wall,
The soul’s fair parchment so bescrawl
With futile warrant, fool’s behest,
That scripture turns to palimpsest.
And indignation fires the verse
When bungling meddlers, learning’s
curse,

THE HAPPY TEACHER

Refashion youth's diviner feature
In the smug image of the teacher."'
A stronger breath was in that strain,
But now I pluck the string again,
Recalling Milton's patience scanty
With wolves within the fold, — how
Dante

Turn'd upside down the pride of place
Of Clement and of Boniface.
Those Pastors—

"Stop!" the Goddess cried,
"Thy wit to madness is allied!
Why shouldst thou fare so far afield?
Does not the time example yield?
The elder poets why invoke
To lift our spiritual yoke?
Sir Philip put the case aright:
'Fool, look within thy heart and write!'
And wouldst thou be a satirist
Of prejudices that persist

DISCOMMODITY OF SATIRE

In education, dying hard,
Presume not to escape unscarr'd.
Shalt see the friend become the foe;
Thy fame a football, to and fro
Bandied; no longer free to live
The scholar's life contemplative,
Thou must exchange for rancorous
 strife

The sweet amenities of life,
And in the arena force perforce
Must battle amid bawlings hoarse;
Perchance beneath calumnious stain
Must die,—best effort spent in vain,
For when was ever satire found
To rail the seal from off the bond?
Dost thou conceit thee to be steel'd
To bear the brunt of such a field?
Friend, let me whisper to thee that
Thou'rt not the bard to bell the cat,
For none has rim'd me such an opus
Since Chaucer stinted of Sir Thopas:

THE HAPPY TEACHER

False cadences and meter cramp,
Allusion smelling of the lamp:
Thy Muse should be a stocking blue!
Now, as I point the path, pursue."

Then to my song the Goddess lent
Numbers and nobler argument: —

II

Who is the Happy Teacher one would
choose

To mould the plastic mind?—began the
Muse.

One first, to speak with Bacon, who, a
brave

Iconoclast of idols of the cave,

Well knows the mind's insidious perils,
knows

To front undauntedly the inward foes;

Who, since the young his prime attention
claim,

To make himself mature directs his
aim;

When most his commerce is with chil-
dren, then

Efficient most among his fellow-men;

Scornful of badges, decorations, toys

THE HAPPY TEACHER

That prove men oft more puerile than
boys;
And smiling at each shibboleth and fad
That show again much learning maketh
mad.

Wide as his commerce with his fellows, so
World-wide his intercourse with those
who know,
Sages and bards of many lands: these
three
For choice,—Greece, England, Italy;
The calm free soul of Goethe; and in
France
Montaigne, who smiles away intolerance;
Nor schooling mean at home here had he
won
From Franklin, Hawthorne, Whitman,
Emerson.
Happily born to manners, though but
rude,

“THE HARVEST OF A QUIET EYE”

Sincere, he nourishes in solitude
Instincts undreamt of in our social state
Which civilizes but to enervate.
Deep in the wilderness he steels his nerve
The wild-brook's temper, strenuous to
serve

At call. Forsaking academic ease
Reads vagrantly in Nature's libraries,
A wandering scholar; from the evening
sky

Reaping “the harvest of a quiet eye.”
Surprising beauty finds an open door
Into his senses, custom-blunt before;
And with the quicken'd vision of the
brain,

Genius beholds within the forest-fane
Wing'd acolytes with ministry divine
Light up the candelabra of the pine.

What though courageous, yet no man of
blood,

THE HAPPY TEACHER

He murders not the natives of the wood,
Begrudging to no life beneath the sun
Its harmless day: a fowler without gun,
A fisher innocent of rod and hook,
Friends with the citizens of bush and
brook.

From close communion with the forest
clan
Return'd, he better serves his fellow-man;
Imbues the young whom he instructs to
bless,
With holy pity, tender thoughtfulness:
With reverence they look to him, and
love,
As having bread to eat they know not of.

That art itself is nature, Shakespeare, who
Deriv'd his sovran art from Nature, knew.
And so by Nature tutor'd and by Art,
Our Master, catholic in taste and heart,

Admires the virtue of the Greek no less
Perchance, than Mediæval holiness;
A fugue of Bach, the forest wind or bird,
Sad Beethoven, and singing river, heard
With equal passion; truth and beauty he
Sees blent in exquisite economy;
Sees oak and obelisk and painted cliff
All historied with speaking hieroglyph;
Cell, feeler, hoof, claw, cunning hand en-
scroll

The legend beautiful that ends in soul.

Such readings prompt his genius to stir
Receptive hearts, a large interpreter
Of letters, gathering from brae and brook
Some pregnant comment bearing on the
book,—

The book, notation of the music heard
First from the mother's tender lip, the
Word:

The word, a document wherein survives

THE HAPPY TEACHER

The record of a myriad myriad lives;
The word, the true foundation of the
school,
Logician's and philosopher's sole tool,
The matrix of the idea, which, having
not,
We fail to level with the Hottentot:
If there be any yet conceited wise
In their own generation, who despise
The word, be they to alien tongue con-
fin'd,
To learn the weakness of the wordless
mind!
The word, the pigment of the poet's art,
The word, that speaks the fulness of the
heart,
The winged word, like arrow to the goal,
Stinging to action the lethargic soul,
The current word, the idiom of the street,
The coin of quick exchange with all we
meet;

“WORDS, WORDS, WORDS”

The fitting word, high culture's final test;
The pungent word of graphic tale and
 jest,
The flavoring lemon in the punch of
 wit,
So apt,—and yet so easy *not* to hit!

But why should we, inheriting the tongue
That Lincoln spake, the word that Shelley sung,
The word that out of Milton's mintage
 sprang,
Debase the coinage with the dross of
 slang,
Whose pinchbeck lustre all is second-
 hand,—
Not coin but counters, current with the
 band
Of slavish spirits, to those chains resign'd
That cramp the imperial stature of the
 mind!

THE HAPPY TEACHER

I sing the word beginning once with
God,
Milestone of backward road from man to
clod,
The word "whose fountain who shall
tell?" and whence
Pours Homer's ample flood of eloquence;
The ballad word which, sung by crowder
blind,
Thrill'd like a trumpet noble Sidney's
mind;
The homely word of Paston Letters old,
Wherein men pray, blaspheme, make
love, and scold,
Limning the features, as in sculpture
rude,
That witness to our common brother-
hood;
The liquid word whose music Chaucer
woke
In that vernacular of English folk;

“I SING THE WORD”

The living word, redeeming still from
death

“The spacious times of great Elizabeth”:
Wipe but the dust from parchment and
from roll,

The word leaps forth to life, a thing of
soul,

Working such wonders as, when rust and
damp

Were rubb'd away, the Genius of the
Lamp.

Hail then the word: the talisman, the
key,

Divining wand and open sesame,
Blood pulsing through one mental lin-
eage,

Seal of one plastic spirit's heritage!
The word, the fossil dead? Nay, these
outlive

Organic life, of lease so fugitive:

THE HAPPY TEACHER

And as from fossil teeth, forgot of Time,
For Cuvier woke the monsters of the
prime,
Awakes, at runic Hempl's charm, the
tongue
The Etrurian shades forgot when Time
was young.

Thus Nature, Wisdom, Poetry combine
In words to touch the soul to issues
fine.
And as perspective art the landscape
shows,
The Master's pencil round the lesson
throws
Color, relief of distance, atmosphere.
His virtuous euphrasy can purge and
clear
The inner vision for effect and cause;
He points Imagination's lens, and
draws

THE PLAY-HOUSE

Into concernment close the past, the far:
Turn but the glass,—the near becomes a
star!

The customary grows miraculous,
While Plutarch's heroes eat and drink
with us.

A mighty Play-House is the Universe
Wherein we all our little parts rehearse:
For footlights, planets,—suns the chan-
deliers;

The overture, the music of the spheres;
The curtain is the all-concealing night:
It rises, and the scene is infinite;

Actors, spectators we; intrigues unfold
Significant; we in the Deed behold
A lineage unsubjected to the tomb
Stretch out, like Banquo's, to the crack
of doom;

Incident, burgeoning from incident,
Into the vast economy is blent;

THE HAPPY TEACHER

The villain foils the hero, and the theme
Draws to a climax; is the Author's scheme
Comic or tragical? We can but know
The tragic moment of our present woe,
Dimly forebode some dread catastrophe;
Till, pity and terror purging us, we see
Perchance with eye prophetic; hear the
chime

Heralding from the horologe the Time
Foretold by seer and poet: life no more
An aimless struggle in the dark; no war,
No fetters but for selfishness; with awe
Hear proclamation of the reign of Law,
Deeming we faintly hear from far above
The golden wedding-bells of Law and
Love.

So seeing, hearing, would he not, our
Youth,
“Live resolute in wholeness, beauty,
truth”?

KATHARSIS

And in what after-apathy could choose
A scene less haloed with ideal hues?
So let each see and live, in view of All
Until the Author lets the curtain fall!

III

SHE paus'd, and holding forth the lyre,
Bended her flashing eye on mine.
“Dear Muse, far from thee to require
My song to follow: more condign
Were punishment on me for this,
Than fell on blinded Thamyris!”
So pray'd I. “When thy voice outspake
That prophecy, my heart was stirr'd;
Do thou again the chords awake,—
Let mellow music now be heard.
Against the night that glooms the Pole
Auroral banners are unfurl'd:
Fixt be the waverings,—my soul
Stares blankly on the changing world.
The curtain of the coming age
Be parted for a moment! Purge
The inward eye to view a stage
Where Love shall be the dramaturge.

Reeling and dizzy here below
A starless sky, we look above
For light in vain: how can we know
That Law shall ever mate with Love?
With microscope we dimly scan
One universe,—with telescope
The other,—spying out for man
What satisfying grounds of hope?
For man here, like the burrowing mole
With level aims and inchlong views,
What vista of the mighty whole
May be without the heavenly Muse?
Tell, is the Happy Teacher blind
To toil for human betterment?
For Hope what warrant may he find?"

To my petition gave consent
The Goddess, with a kindly smile:
And though the rime indignant rang
With hoarse invective for awhile,
Yet sweetlier afterward she sang:

IV

“O BREASTS, where are ye, of all life the
source?”

Thus, with poor Faust, while Trade pur-
sues her course,

I hear the unborn generations groan,
Who, crying out for bread, receive a
stone.

No longer underneath the forest thatch
Flow waters (but the smoker has his
match!);

A sewer in the shrunken river's bed
Festers (what then? the hungry press is
fed:

I venture no allusion, speaking thus,
Comparison would be malodorous),
Or else the torrent, mocking human toil,
Sweeps to the sea the harvest and the
soil.

TREASON TO POSTERITY

Has Earth no vengeance, have the Heav-
ens no curse

For him who by destruction fills his
purse?

Let actuaries calculate the worth

Of him who, dying, poorer leaves the
earth:

Carve the hard face, that coming man
may see

The cruel features of his enemy!

Hark! by the noble soul distinctly heard,

Out of those marble lips escapes the Word

That sacrifice of self for those unborn

Is worship which the gods will never
scorn.

Who makes the world his oyster, leaves
it dead

And done with, soon as ever he has fed,—

Who sucks the juice and chucks away the
shell,—

Should find no fellowship except in Hell

THE HAPPY TEACHER

Where Dante found the traitors winter-
ing,—
Congenial spirits for the Lumber King.

Ofttimes our Master, haunted by the
theme
Of our unnatural *unsocial* scheme,
With corded brow forwent his wonted
cheer,
Foreboding Revolution drawing near:
Cast to the melting-pot in vision saw
The time-worn brazen tablets of the law;
Religion's reverend landmarks overborne;
The metes and bounds of mine and thine
uptorn;
Fair arts of man's long, long endeavor,
melt
In one black hell-broth. This, he deeply
felt,
Is fault of those who throng the drawing-
room

Of Empress Grundy, and applaud her
doom

On all who dare to think; the fault of
those

Who batten upon superstition, foes
Of all experiment; of those who exalt
Their fortunes upon ruin'd hopes; the
fault

Of great industrial captains, skill'd to
roll

Up dividends by scaling down the soul;
Of statesmen strenuous to make the most
Of public taste for moral tea and toast;
Of Aarons with lawn sleeves wherein to
laugh

When bows the world before the Golden
Calf;

Of priests who point the penitent rich a
road

Around the Needle's Eye,—the poor a
code

Of iron, rubricated *Thou Shalt Not*:
These fan the flame beneath the melting-
pot!

Beyond such cataclysm, by faith he saw
Freedom arisen, born of Inward Law,—
It is unlawful, bard and prophet say,
That he who knows, should other law
obey!

An age draws on of equal chance for all,
Knowledge and gentle manners general,
When Science lengthens life,—a peaceful
death

The lot of every being drawing breath,—
The sting of death gone with the ghost of
sin;

Few courts of law, because the law within
Prescribes the golden rule of equal rights,
And Freedom quells destructive appe-
tites;

In wiser mating man and woman blent

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

Harmonious like voice and instrument;
Age when emancipated womankind
No more a serpent in the garden find,
No angel brandishing a sword of fire
Above the Paradise of Heart's Desire;
When common purposes, affection high
Alone shall consecrate the nuptial tie;
And parenthood shall know but one disgrace, —

To breed a child not bettering the race.
Such vision through the gate of horn he
saw,

Exulting in the true Utopia.

“What,” some will ask, “what of the life
to come?”

He, like the kings of modern thought is
dumb,

Never affirming what he cannot know,
Still less denying, for he hopes it so.
To theologic warfare calls a truce, —

THE HAPPY TEACHER

A different Bannockburn demands its
Bruce,

Blares forth to us another trumpet-call;
On harder quest must go Sir Percival,
By consecration to the race attest
He guards the Holy Grail within his
breast.

No follower and no flatterer of the crowd,
Not foremost in the synagogue is bow'd
Our Teacher, giving alms unseen of
men, —

Shouts not upon the housetop his Amen!
Yet when Hosannah to the Lord on High,
With voice of many waters people cry,
Than he, none feels the common impulse
more:

But, praying, goes within, and shuts the
door.

Deep in the heart he keeps a Holy Shrine:
There looks he, not in vain, for the Di-
vine.

As one who owns a little plot of ground,
Owns underneath as far as drill can sound,
And downward howsoever far he go,
Comes on fresh veins upwelling from below,

While farther down, conceal'd from human sight,

Are springs of power and riches infinite:
Thus underneath our little minds we hold,
Deep under deep, resources manifold,
And man (all men, beneath their surface selves)

Antæus-like, grows stronger as he delves;
If any one a deeper stratum tap,
We term him Genius; could you mine and sap

And tunnel till the deep of deeps you trod,—

What then? You syllable sublimely,—
God!

Thence, in the solitude, an effluence

THE HAPPY TEACHER

Streams up from fountains far beneath
the sense,
Monitions, from the roots of Being sent,
Of issues growing to Divine Event,
Impermanence becoming permanent.

V

SUCH was the gospel, the good news
Prophetical that sang the Muse;
While yet the chords were sounding on,
I lookt, and lo! the Muse was gone.
So left, I cannot fitly word
The mood whereto my heart was stirred;
For who am I that I take up
The lyre the Heavenly Muse let drop?
No harmony could I command,—
The strings would snap beneath my hand.

Wanting the Muse,—these verses show
it,—

One may be rimer, never Poet;
Nor do the wise the proverb scorn
That poets are not made, but born;
Nor yet that other commonplace,
How bards their birthright oft disgrace!

THE HAPPY TEACHER

To voices strange the Goddess grants
The burden of her utterance:
Half-frenzied voices, Blake or Smart,
Their lucid madness passing art;
Weak Coleridge or weak Rousseau;
Sick Heine, Leopardi, Poe;
Decadent Villon or Verlaine;
Witness wild Byron's wondering strain, —
"And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?"
Her burden trembling in his voice,
The saddest poet may rejoice;
But when the Muse has passed along,
The sweetest harp is left unstrung.

So Peter, James, and John of yore
Saw God transfigured: fishermen
Poor, humble, had they been before,
And after seem'd the like again;
Beheld no more the raiment bright
That in such hour the Master wore,

PALINODE

Heard talking with him on the height
Moses, Elijah, nevermore:
But oh! the wonder and the awe
Of what that once they heard and saw!

Before the wonder cease to thrill
(Hark to the cadence sounding still!)
Friends, pardon, while in minor mode,
The rimer hums his Palinode.
Alas! it is the Poet's shame
That what he dream'd, he ne'er be-
came.

"I see, approve the good, the worse
I follow,—" So the famous verse
Doth moralize Medea's woes;
And so our Portia, but in prose,—
"Were it as easy do the best
As know it,—" wherefore quote the rest?
A modern instance,—what we knew
And lov'd, we mostly fail'd to do.
A truant, I in Nature's school

THE HAPPY TEACHER

Made no exception to the rule
That thought no master-key to act is,
Nor precept magnet to right practise;
Could not through all my course control

The needle wavering from the Pole;
Unlike the Priest who, poets say,
“Allur’d to Heaven and led the way!”

To melancholy thought a truce!
The Poet finds a better use
In Parable, and finer grace.
Recall the Athenian torch-race,—
The race of the lampadephore:
The start was from the fire-god’s door;
The goal, Acropolis; the night
Moonless; the runners took their light
From the Promethean altar: then
Between the craning files of men,
Along the glittering portico
(But softly, softly here, because

Of certain whiffs and gusty flaws!),
Through street, through Agora they
go

Racing, intent to keep the torch
Symbolic, burning to the last;
And while the foremost nears the hill,
The hindmost, not the least in skill,
Is striding by the Painted Porch,
The flame defending with the finger,
And curbs himself, appears to linger
Reluctant, lest he run too fast:
For, should the cresset, flickering dim,
Be puft out by a counterblast,
Runner, however fleet of limb,
Halts,—Nemesis o’ertaking him!

A band of seven, avoiding this,
Run up the steep Acropolis,
Steadily mounting high and higher;
The Propylæa reflect the fire
Until the polisht statues bright

THE HAPPY TEACHER

Gleam out like specters through the
night.

“Ah! could one name the sevenfold
crew!”

“Look! now there are but five in
view!”

The others? ask the treacherous wind!

“Now four,—now three,—and now but
two!”

But look again! One far behind

Who crept by wall, and nurst his
breath,

Safeguarding still the flame from death,
Now darts from hiding, grasps the
chance,

Gains on the foremost,—who (perchance
Already clutching for the meed

Which not so lightly Nike grants!)

Was flagging when supreme the need

To run, to run!—and with a burst

Of speed, behold, the last, now first,

“—THAT’S FOR REMEMBRANCE”

Flashes along with lamp not dull,
Enters the Gateway beautiful,
And stands: —to him award the crown.

Moral? What boot to write it down?—
The race not always to the swift!
To him who guards of gifts the gift,
The fire, the fire Promethean
The pitying Titan flung to man,
The sacred torch, the mystic sign
Of that within we call divine,
Until the shining goal is won,
To him the guerdon be, “Well done!”

Oh! could some brave lampadephore
Of tougher sinew, stouter soul,
Swift flaming forward where I
swerv’d,
Have borne my cresset to the goal,—
Amid the pæan’s wild uproar
What praise had such as I deserv’d?

THE HAPPY TEACHER

Few trace the record dim beneath
The statue of the victor set,
Where on the very plinth they write
The name of one men best forget,
Who, though the winner of no wreath,
Once held the sacred torch alight.

Explicit



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